

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application is requested. Claims 1-8 remain active in the application subsequent to entry of this Amendment.

This Amendment accompanies a Request for Continued Examination.

This Amendment responds to the Official Action of July 26, 2006, a Final Rejection, and comments in the Advisory Action of November 8, 2006 which indicates the After-Final Amendment filed October 23, 2006 would be entered for purposes of appeal. As a Notice of Appeal has not been filed it is counsel's understanding the October 23, 2006 Amendment has not been entered.

Information Disclosure Statements

The Information Disclosure Statements filed August 10 and 16, 2006 were considered and entered according to the Advisory Action of November 8, 2006.

Discussion of Claim Amendments

Claims 1 and 4 have been amended consistent with the description of the invention for instance as depicted in Figure 1 of the drawings as well as in the description at paragraphs [0122]-[0125] of published application U.S. 2004/0151872, the published version of the subject application. In particular, in the mixing step a binder is mixed with a virgin ceramic starting material and reclaimed powder which is produced during the reclaiming step. These amendments to claims 1 and 4 provide ample antecedent basis for claims 2 and 7 and thus resolves the rejection of claims 2 and 7 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Consequential changes have been made in terms of antecedent basis in claims 2 and 7 having regard to the amendments made to claims 1 and 4, respectively. The Advisory Action of November 8, 2006 indicates these changes are effective to remove the rejection under 35 USC §112, second paragraph.

Claim 1 is also amended to specify a minimum particle size for the reclaimed powder added in the mixing step. These changes are consistent with the description of the invention, for example

... it has been found that the critical point causing deterioration in the thermal expansion coefficient of a cordierite ceramic body is a particle size of 1 mm of the reclaimed powder and a

ceramic cordierite body produced from a reclaimed powder having a particle size of less than 1 mm is poor in the quality. This is described in detail later in Example 2. (page 10, lines 14-21).

... In this case, not only particles smaller than a predetermined size but also particles larger than a predetermined size are removed, so that the particle size of the reclaimed powder can be unfailingly made to fall within a predetermined range. (page 10, line 33-page 11, line 1).

... when the particle size of the reclaimed powder is 1 mm or more, the viscosity of the humidified starting material is stable. (page 28, lines 30-32).

These amendments make it clear that the reclaimed powder is composed of particles of 1 mm in size or larger and respond to the examiner's comments on page 2, Appendix A of the Advisory Action.

Response to Rejection of Claims 1-8

Claims 1-8 stand rejected as being unpatentable over the disclosures of U.S. 4,851,376 to Asami et al. Applicants disagree with this rejection as the claims now under review are clearly distinguishable and patentable over the disclosures of this citation.

Comparing the present invention as recited in claim 1 of this application with the disclosure of Asami et al, all particles having a particle size less than 1 mm are removed in the reclaiming step of the present invention. The removal of these finer particles is intended to improve the quality of the cordierite ceramic body as explained in the specification and discussed in the above paragraphs.

Contrary to this, as discussed on page 7, third paragraph of the Amendment of May 3, 2006, Asami is silent concerning this feature. This is because Asami intends to remove and discard particles having sizes exceeding 150 microns from the paste by using a 150-micron slit screen (*see*, Example 2 of US '376). The screened paste is then extruded and fired. That is, Asami also teaches use of the particles having a particle size less than 1 mm, particles which are removed in the present invention.

In addition, the reclaiming step of the present invention is carried out in the powdery basis using powders -- note applicants reclaim a powder as specified in the last paragraphs of claims 1 and 4 -- whereas Asami's process is carried out in the paste basis. It will be immediately apparent that these two inventions are different taking into account the physical state of the starting materials.

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Appl. No. 10/763,158
November 22, 2006

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Response to Rejection of Claims 9-11

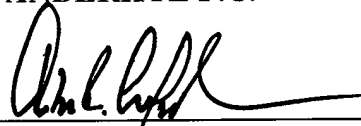
Claims 9-11 are rejected as being unpatentable over the same reference as discussed above in view of a secondary reference. To advance examination of this application, claims 9-11 have been canceled, this action being taken without disclaimer or prejudice to a continuing application directed to the subject matter of these claims.

For the above reasons it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application define inventive subject matter, are definite and compliant with 35 USC §112, second paragraph and are patentable. Reconsideration and allowance are solicited. Should the examiner require further information, please contact the undersigned by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

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